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**Review of "Alessandro Duranti. Etnografia del parlare quotidiano. Roma,
La Nuova Italia Scientifica (1992)"**

Schmid, Stephan

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ZORA URL: <https://doi.org/10.5167/uzh-117563>
Journal Article

Originally published at:
Schmid, Stephan (1995). Review of "Alessandro Duranti. Etnografia del parlare quotidiano. Roma, La
Nuova Italia Scientifica (1992)". *Multilingua*, 14(2):209-213.

In Chapter 1 Padilla is in general critical of the literature on bilingual education, characterizing it as lacking both a mission and theoretical coherence. Giving it a mission in line with the philosophy underlying this book will involve reconceptualizing bilingual education as a strategy for all students and not as a special instructional program for disadvantaged minorities. In her chapter (6) Lindholm argues for bilingual immersion programs which simultaneously meet the language education needs of majority and minority students.

The chapters in Part IV deal with practical matters involved in the design and implementation of different types of programs, particularly innovative techniques such as the dialogue journal described in Chapter 12 by Peyton, in which students write freely about any topic to their teachers and receive written replies from them. This procedure not only allows teachers and students to get to know one another better by providing an additional context and type of mutual interaction, but it also allows students an opportunity for individual attention. In Chapter 13 Peyton describes how she adapted the journal exercise for use with a class of first graders learning how to write English as a foreign language. The chapter (15) by Willetts and Christian is particularly helpful since it provides an overview of the types of materials needed for innovative language teaching and their accessibility (see especially the appendix to the chapter on Spanish-English bilingual immersion materials).

The space available for this review has not permitted me to comment on each of the chapters. However, the book will be valuable reading for anyone with interests in bilingualism and education more generally. It will be particularly helpful to teachers involved in bilingual programs.

University of Oxford

SUZANNE ROMAINE

Alessandro Duranti, *Etnografia del parlare quotidiano*. Roma: La Nuova Italia Scientifica, 1992, 161pp., Lit. 26,000.

The purpose of the book under review is to offer Italian students an original introduction (i.e., not a translation) to basic concepts and the methodology of the ethnography of speaking.¹ There is no doubt that Duranti is the most suitable person for such an enterprise, since he is the only Italian scholar who can draw not only on previous theoretical and descriptive work in this field (mostly published in English, e.g., Duranti 1985, 1988; Goodwin and Duranti 1992), but also on a wealth of experience of ethnographic research in Western Samoa, done by himself and his wife, Elinor Ochs (see, for example, Duranti 1981 and Ochs 1988). It is precisely the continuous

dialectic movement between theoretical issues and their exemplification by means of empirical data which characterizes this introduction to the ethnography of speaking.

The first chapter, 'Etnografia, linguaggio ed esperienze quotidiane', leads us to the basic tenets of the theory and method of the ethnography of speaking, namely its conception of language as an essential element of social life and its emphasis on the necessity of reconstructing the meaning of linguistic forms on the basis of a description of the context in which these forms are uttered, trying to establish how they are interpreted by the participants of the communicative event. This overall characterization of the framework explains the interdisciplinary nature of this approach, which takes into account findings and proposals of different scientific traditions, such as Malinowski's ethnography, Vygotskij's psycholinguistics, Wittgenstein's language philosophy and Husserl's phenomenology; it also clarifies the relationship of the ethnography of speaking to pragmatics, conversational analysis and ethnomethodology. The second chapter, 'L'evento linguistico come unità d'analisi', proposes considering speech events as the basic unit for linguistic analysis and provides a thorough illustration of the 16 components of Hymes' model of communication, which, grouped into 8 main entries, form the acronym SPEAKING (situation, participants, ends, act sequence, key, instrumentalities, norms, genres; cf. Duranti 1985: 202-220).

From the third to the fifth chapter, Duranti deals mainly with language and social life in Samoa. Chapter three, 'La visita: etnografia di un evento linguistico samoano', consists of a detailed analysis of a single communicative event: it illuminates not only the sequential organization of the visit, but also the different phonological varieties used by the participants. Another aspect of register variation, namely Samoan respect vocabulary, is illustrated in chapter four, 'Fare e dire: lavoro e ideologie linguistiche', which is concerned with the hierarchical organization of Samoan society, as well as with the more general anthropological issue of private property (and its links with 'linguistic ideologies'). Chapter five, 'Linguaggio, azione e concetto del sé: gli effetti della scolarizzazione', focuses on the impact of literacy and particular teaching methods on the cultural representations of individual and social life in the traditional village. In the last chapter, 'Wittgenstein in Samoa', the author takes the ethnography of speaking to its most radical conclusion, by inverting the ethnocentric viewpoint of western science: it is not Wittgenstein's philosophy which explains the verbal behavior of Samoans, but on the contrary the native theory of the latter which sheds light on the concept of 'meaning' in the *Philosophische Untersuchungen*.

All in all, Duranti's book is not only an introduction to a particular approach in linguistic research, but also an ethnographic description of Samoan culture by means of an analysis of verbal interaction in everyday life; more-

over, the ethnography of speaking is presented as a general theory of language use. Thus, a number of fundamental problems of linguistic theory are raised, which can obviously only be hinted at here; nevertheless, as an 'outsider' I would like to mention some points which seem to me to be of particular interest. First, there is the problem of the great explanatory power of the ethnography of speaking, which not only explains the meaning of linguistic forms by analyzing their contexts (p. 32), but also studies social events from the point of view of verbal interaction (p. 38). By stressing the fundamental link between social life and language structure, the ethnography of speaking at the same time becomes a sort of context linguistics and a particular approach in social science. Sometimes, it is not clear whether the primary goal of the ethnography of speaking is the analysis of speech events, or the explanation of social structure.

Normally, linguistic elements (such as sounds, lexical items, utterances, etc.) are more easily analyzable than social structure, especially if an ethnomethodological principle prevents one from using *a priori* categories like 'class' or 'role' (p. 28). Can the 'sociocultural system' be considered a semi-otic system just like human language (p. 35), and of what kind are, then, the entities and representations of such a system? If the researcher has to take into account 'social organization' (p. 38), the requirement of adopting an 'emic' perspective (which should, if possible, reflect the participants' interpretation of the speech event) becomes rather difficult: even if we accept Duranti's homology between work and language (and, in particular, the correlation between private property and the western concept of 'meaning'), there can be no doubt that such an interpretation does not rest solely on the 'emic' analysis of the opposite values of Samoan society, but also on pre-established 'etic' concepts such as the ideas formulated by the Marxist philosopher Rossi-Landi. It seems to me that the dialectic relationship between theoretical models and empirical analysis is more evident if we consider them as two distinct moments of the scientific procedure, rather than substituting them, as Duranti does, by attributing a theoretical status to the ethnographic data themselves (p. 150).

One of the most critical issues of the ethnography of speaking as presented by Duranti concerns the problem of meaning (pp. 102-117). The author opposes an 'individualist' conception (related to the notion of intentionality, and widespread in the Anglo-Saxon world) to a more cooperative and contextual interpretation, which typically shows up in Samoan communicative practice. One could note, at this point, that the idea of the conventional nature of meaning has been one of the guiding principles of European structuralism and that, for instance, Saussure's conception of language as a *fait social* has nothing to do with 'meaning as possession' or with capitalist ideology. As to the fundamental ontological problem of the

relationship between language and the world, Duranti rejects the neo-Kantian fallacy (according to which language 'creates' the world), by saying that language 'constitutes' the world, thus being part of it (pp. 142–143). On the other hand, he seems to deny the abstract aspect of meaning, since he conceives it merely as a relationship between a speaker, an 'object' and another person (p. 148). Obviously, in a decade when the cognitivist paradigm has had a strong impact on linguistic theory, such a view, in which – as Duranti puts it (p. 145) – mental reality is replaced by attention to the social context, is the most provocative of the positions taken by the ethnography of speaking.

One may agree or disagree with such controversial statements, but it should be pointed out that these aspects by no means diminish the interest of Duranti's work. This is a very personal book, as one realizes from the very first page: the description of the marvellous Samoan landscape and the narration of an anecdotal episode (one boy challenging another to fight) are much more reminiscent of the beginning of a novel than of scientific prose. This kind of writing allows the reader to come closer to the 'insider's view', which is central to the ethnography of speaking approach; together with the very clear and concise tackling of the more abstract issues, it contributes to the pleasure of reading. The author wants us to share not only a fascinating research enterprise, but also some of his own experience of life. *Etnografia del parlare quotidiano* is dedicated to those who miss Giorgio Raimondo Cardona, the Italian ethnolinguist who died suddenly in 1988.

University of Zurich

STEPHAN SCHMID

Note

1. I use this term which seems to me more widespread than the alternative 'ethnography of communication'. Note that the title of Duranti's book *Etnografia del parlare quotidiano* would correspond to 'ethnography of everyday talk'.

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Tanulmányok a határainkon túli kétnyelvűségről, szerkesztette Kontra Miklós. Budapest: Magyarságkutató Intézet (= A magyarságkutatás könyvtára, XI.), 1991, 163 pp., 95 forint.

[Miklós Kontra (ed.), *Studies in Bilingualism Beyond our Borders*. Budapest: Institute of Hungarian Studies (= Library of Hungarian Studies, Vol. XI.)]¹

There are between three and four million Hungarians in the countries immediately surrounding the Republic of Hungary. This figure represents at least a quarter of all the Hungarians in Central/Eastern Europe and means that in absolute terms Hungarians form the biggest minority in the region, though outside Hungary they never comprise more than about 10% of the population of any single country in it. At first it may seem surprising that, although the region's ethnic diversity continues to dominate the headlines, so little is known of them and their history. And it is astonishing to read in Miklós Kontra's useful introduction to this important volume, that even in Hungary proper much of the heated discussion of this sensitive issue is ill-informed.

On reflection, however, there are many reasons why this should be the case. Above all, the slate was never clean. The beginning of the story must be taken back at least to the last century, when the boot was on the other foot and the emerging national consciousness of the various Slav and Rumanian peoples in the historic kingdom of Hungary began to chafe at their lowly status in Austro-Hungarian society and the Magyarization that offered the only path to upward mobility. Many in the successor states thus saw the peace treaties at the end of World War I as giving Hungary its comeuppance; at the same time, revision of the frontiers became the main goal of the new Hungary's foreign policy until the next World War, when it was partly and temporarily achieved – at a colossal price. For many of the surviving Hungarians, especially in the areas affected by the Vienna awards, the aftermath of war surpassed it in horror. In Slovakia, for example, part of the understated background to the first paper in this collection includes the follow-